

Collaborative Stories - Vol. II



Foreword

Welcome to our second annual set of RCAN Stories!

This year we have two additional stories for a total of ten. We were joined by our first school outside the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Newark (RCAN).

This school year was the first year our technology curriculum map was complete and used across the Archdiocese. Several of the skills challenge students and teachers to create and collaborate with students in other schools and around the world. RCAN Stories provides students from preschool through eighth grade the ability to take those first steps with the support of classroom teachers and technology integration specialists.

As students wrote they learned why it was important to use descriptive words and how to create a cliffhanger that another class would pick up to continue the journey of the characters in that chapter.

As you read the stories you will find themes that mirror the faith values of our Catholic schools. There are numerous examples of expressions of community, compassion, forgiveness, hope, justice, love, peace, and service.

Technology played a key role as students worked without regard to time and space. The **wiki** acted as a collaborative space to write the story and add the illustrations. As one class finished their paragraphs, the next class read the story and continued the theme. The student drawn images showcase their artistic talent and add a further layer to the story.

We look forward to producing more stories in the coming years.

Enjoy Volume II of RCAN Stories!

Ann Oro



Director of K12 Instructional Technology
Schools Office
Archdiocese of Newark (NJ)

Project website:

<http://rcanstories.wikispaces.com>

Oooshe

In the bottom of the deep dark blue ocean there was an octopus named Oooshe. She was crying because she was sad. Oooshe's eight legs were always in the way. She would always start the day happy but then things happened.



Oooshe stepped a lot on her legs with her other feet. She couldn't always walk right. Oooshe wanted to find a way to fix her legs. What could she do? She was always getting worried.

One day, Oooshe tripped over something on the ocean floor. It was a crab in a yoga pose! He and Oooshe were surprised! Oooshe quickly apologized to the crab for being so clumsy. The crab told her that his name was Irving and that Oooshe wasn't clumsy, she just needed better balance and a little more



confidence. Irving told her that he was a yoga teacher and his class was about to start! He invited her to stay

Oooshe was very nervous but decided to give the class a try. She really wanted better balance.



Other ocean animals came to the class. There were a few turtles and crabs, another octopus, and a lobster. The class began, but not everybody was able to do all the yoga poses. Oooshe saw how they all tried their best and it made her want to try her best too. Irving told Oooshe that she did very well and to please come back again. He also

introduced her to a turtle named Lucy and the other octopus named Elijah. They told her that they had balance problems too.

Lucy told her



that she does karate and Elijah told her that he dances. They said they would help Ooshe by teaching her both activities.

Ooshe thought that learning karate and dance sounded like a good idea. She went to many classes with Lucy and Elijah. She was tired but she did not give up! Her balance got better and better. Plus, she made some new friends! Ooshe was so happy that she wanted to celebrate. She invited her new friends to a party.

“How about an Obstacle Course Party?” said Ooshe. We can show how much we learned and practice balancing. They invited all their friends, Sammy Seahorse, Patty Pufferfish, Carl Clownfish and Steven Starfish. “Let’s start the party,” cried Patty Pufferfish. The sea creatures jumped, crawled, swam, hopped, leaped, flipped and rolled.

First, Ooshe, using her new confidence, flipped over the clams. Steven Starfish crawled through a tunnel of seaweed. Carl Clownfish leaped over a coral reef and Patty Pufferfish hopped over a pile of shells. Then, all the friends went through the course over and over again!



They all had a great time enjoying each other and exploring their talents. Not everyone could do the same thing, but everyone had fun. At the end of the party, all the sea creatures learned to always try their best, and team work will do the rest! Everyone Wins!

Finally, Ooshe asked all her friends to make a circle, to thank God for each other and for their many talents.

Afterwards, they cheered, “Bravo, Bravo!”



This story was written by:

Linda Manach's PreK - Aquinas Academy - Livingston, NJ

Melissa Calicchio's PreK - Good Shepherd Academy - Nutley, NJ

Jennifer Durkin's PreK - St. Joseph and St. Robert School - Warrington PA (Archdiocese of Philadelphia)

Sherre Henderson's Kindergarten - Visitation Academy - Paramus, NJ

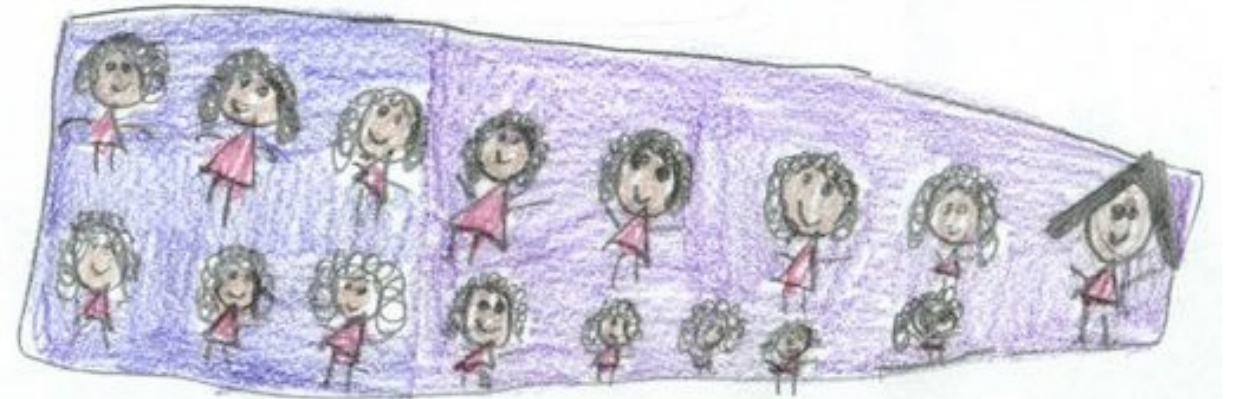
Mrs. Miller's Mysterious Mystery Box

Once upon a time during a long winter break the students in Mrs. Miller's first grade class were excited to talk about what they did during their time off. As the students were unpacking they discovered a very large bright pink box on the teacher's desk. Mrs. Miller was shocked to see such enormous box in her classroom.



She tried to open it but had a hard time doing it. She then buzzed the main office for Mr. Victor, the schools janitor to see if he could help out. Mr. Victor came into the classroom and was greeted by Mrs. Miller's first grade class shouting, "Help us see what could be inside this mystery box!" He slowly opened the box in front of the class.

Everyone in the class including the teacher was on their feet waiting to see what could it be inside this large box. Mr. Victor opened the top of the box and out came the class pet, a pink pig! The class was so excited. Mr. Victor handed the pig to the teacher with a letter from the Atlantic Zoo where the pig was from. Mrs. Miller told the class to sit on the magic carpet so they could read the letter together. The letter read...



Dear Friends,

Your teacher contacted us to see if we can have your class adopt a class pet for a few months. We decided to bring to you our newest member of the zoo. Please make sure you take good care of the pig, give it a name, feed it twice a day and clean the cage. You may bring in any type of blankets from home for your newest classmate.

Remember, have fun and share your pet with the school.

Sincerely,

Bob Smith
The Atlantic Zoo Director





The little pig was scared to come out so Mrs. Smith decided to play some soft music and had the class sit quietly and wait to see what the pig would do. The class pet slowly sat on Mrs. Miller's lap as she began

to read a book called, *Old McDonald Had a Farm*. After the story, the class created a list of names for the class pet. Mrs. Miller saw that the list was very long so she decided to be fair and place all the names in a hat and the one that came out would be the chosen name for the class pet.

Mrs. Miller asked the art teacher to pick a name. The art teacher picked a piece of paper, she opened it, and she read Gumball! "Yay!," shouted the students. Bella asked, "Do we have a toy Gumball can play with?" "Of course!" said Mrs. Miller, "Gumball needs a toy!" Mrs. Miller went to the closet and got Gumball a ball to play with.



Gumball liked the ball. He brought it into the middle of the circle of students sitting on the rug. He started to do some tricks with the ball. First, he did a front flip over the ball. Next, he did a backflip over

the ball. All of the students gasped in delight, and they giggled and some said awwweee. Nathaniel said, "Hey, our pig Gumball is just like another famous pig from that story we read last week." Scarlett shouted, "Ohh I know, he's just like the pig in *Charlotte's Web*." They all laughed.

Gumball played and played and played. The kids had to get back to work so Gumball took a nap in his cage. It was almost time to go home. The kids packed up and said their prayers. Mrs. Miller asked the class, "What should we do with Gumball tonight?" Lilly asked Mrs. Miller if she could bring Gumball home. "Awww, that's not fair, I want to bring Gumball home too," shouted the students.



So Mrs. Miller explained to the class that it would be better if she took Gumball home for the first night and give everyone a list of things that they would need to take care of the pig at home the next day. She told them they could all take turns taking care of Gumball after they got the things they need to take care of him. The students thought that was a great idea!



That night Mrs. Miller unlocked Gumball's cage and put some corn for him to eat and a blanket to stay warm, but she forgot to lock the cage again. Once she saw Gumball eating and resting, she went to bed herself. After

Gumball finished eating, he looked around and noticed that no one was there.

So Gumball decided to venture out into Mrs. Miller's house! He was still hungry so he ran to Mrs. Miller's corn bag and ate as much corn as he could. Then he



decided to jump and play on her couch. "Wow!" Gumball said, "This is so much fun but I can't believe I ate all of that corn and jumped around so much! Now my belly is so full and I feel really sleepy now. I think I need to go back to sleep now!" He slowly walked back to his cage, but before he could make it back, he fell fast asleep on Mrs. Miller's rug. So while he was sleeping, he dreamed of the children and wondered what they were doing at their homes.



All of a sudden, Gumball was woken up out of a deep sleep. He heard someone rustling around the bedroom. “OH NO!! Mrs. Miller is awake, I better get back to my cage real fast before I am caught!” Gumball said nervously. So he quickly ran into his cage, without being seen and he pretended to be sleeping. Mrs. Miller needed a quick drink of water and said to herself, “I better check on Gumball to make sure he is warm enough!” She was shocked to see the door unlocked but that Gumball didn't escape! “You are such a good class pet, Gumball! I am so happy you didn't get lost in my house. The children would have been so upset!” Mrs. Miller exclaimed. With that, she decided to reward Gumball and give him some more corn but was surprised to see not much left. She said to herself, “Hmmmmm, I wonder where all the corn went?” Gumball overheard her and quickly gave a wink and turned back around and went to sleep again! His belly was full and he knew he was safe and sound!

He was looking forward to the next adventure in Mrs. Miller's class!

The End!

This story was written by:

Caterina Cuoco's First Grade - Academy of Our Lady of Grace - Fairview, NJ

Shannon Donner's First Grade - Visitation Academy - Paramus, NJ

Joyce Coleman's First Grade - Academy of Our Lady - Glen Rock, NJ

Eleonora Rubino's First Grade - Visitation Academy - Paramus, NJ

Michele Donovan's First Grade - Corpus Christi School - Hasbrouck Heights, NJ

Finding Candy Land!

It was a hot, Fourth of July, 2004, and Jake found himself huddled in the corner of a huge warehouse on the outskirts of his home town of Summersville, Kentucky. Jake was a tall, athletic, 13-year-old boy, who had always been quite adventurous. He had left his house about an hour ago when he received an iMessage from his younger cousin, Billy.



Billy told Jake in the message that he had been wandering around the forest on the edge of Summersville and had gotten lost. Billy was only five, but he was a funny, chubby kid who seemed to have a knack for finding trouble. Billy could be rather shy around most people, but luckily he took his iPad everywhere with him so he could contact his cousin when he needed help.

Unfortunately, Billy picked a bad day to go off on an adventure in the forest. A fierce tornado had unexpectedly ripped through the Kentucky town and Billy was forced to take cover under some thick thorn bushes. He was normally a very brave little boy, but he started to panic a bit when he



realized his clothing was stuck on the thorns all around him. Meanwhile, Jake had been headed for the forest, but had to run to safety in the warehouse, and was curled in a ball with his hands covering his ears from the frightening noise of the tornado winds.

Just then the most amazing thing happened. An enormous hawk swooped down into the thorn bushes and pulled back the thorny branches that were trapping little Billy. Billy looked up to the sky and saw the enormous shadow and a cloud in the shape of a cross. He realized that Jesus sent him the bird.



Billy said a prayer of thanks to Jesus for sending him the bird. He was very thankful because the bird rescued him and saved him from being trapped in the thorn bush



during the harsh tornado. He continued his prayer, also praying that his beloved cousin Jake would remain safe. Then, Billy decided to go out to search for Jake.

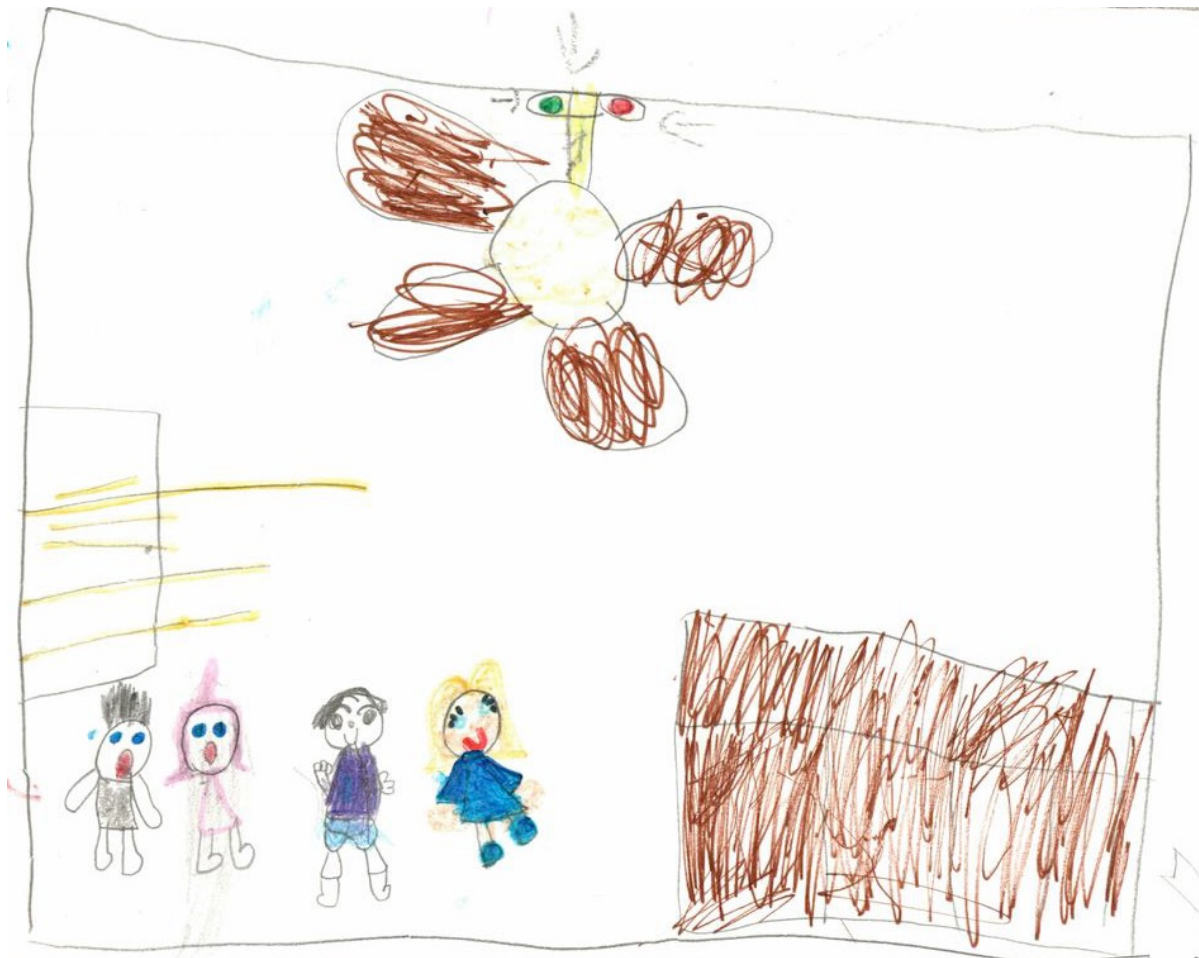


Billy bravely sprinted toward the woods to find Jake. Billy ended up getting lost himself and night fell upon them. Billy then sees the same bird that Jesus sent him and begins to follow it. The stars lit up the sky so Billy was

able to see the bird. The bird led Billy to another bird which was watching over Jake. The two boys hugged tightly. As they're strolling home, the tornado appears again. The boys get swept up into the tornado. After spinning, they land, and realized they were in a magical land.



The magical land had all types of chocolate, candy, and many sweets. Billy and Jake met a small cookie monster while exploring the land who took them to the cotton candy mansion next to a giant chocolate volcano.



This was the home of the chocolate king. Billy and Jake went inside the mansion and woke up the King because they wanted help on how to get back home. The king wanted Billy and Jake to leave right away and was very rude. The king sent them out with little marshmallow soldiers because all the king wanted was to sleep. Billy and Jake felt hungry on their way out so they decided to stop by the candy station and eat some yummy lollipops and cookies. Once they were done eating,

they stepped out and luckily, they found a magical unicorn that lead them to the birds that Jesus sent earlier that day. They decided to follow the birds which then led them to another tornado. Billy and Jake jumped in and in no time they were back in their neighborhood.

As the boys began to walk home, they realized that Summersville had changed. Where was their favorite ice cream shop? Where was the wishing well in the park? They were confused, and decided to knock on the door of the first house they saw.

Inside the house, there was a woman and two children. The woman's name was the same as their grandmother's, and the children's names were the same as their parent's names. The boys realized what this meant. They just met their parents as children, and they had gone back in time! They wondered how they would ever really get home.



landed.

Just then, a magical rainbow appeared in the sky. The boys decided to jump on the rainbow and slide down. They slid for what felt like 100 years! Then, they finally

Phew! They were back in the old warehouse. The boys learned of the ancient tale of the warehouse. It was a magical portal that caused a tornado, and took good children to a candy land to thank them for following Jesus. The boys visited the warehouse and candy land often, until one day the portal didn't open for them anymore.

This story was written by:

Jill Spellman's Second Grade - Holy Trinity School - Westfield, NJ

Mary Flynn's Second Grade - Academy of the Most Blessed Sacrament - Franklin Lakes, NJ

Mrs. Polo's Second Grade - Saint Genevieve School - Elizabeth, NJ

Brianna Raddi's Second Grade - Academy of Our Lady of Grace - Fairview, NJ

Albert and Max

Once upon a time there were two nine-year-old boys named Albert and Max who liked to do a helpful thing called “cleaning up the Earth.” What they did was walk around with a grabber and a garbage bag and pick up any litter they could find. They spent most of their time picking up old newspapers, bottles, and cans that people were too lazy to recycle.



But sometimes they found little treasures, like the day they discovered \$20 stuck between the pages of an old book. Albert thought they should spend the \$20 on candy and junk food and have a feast. “After all,” said Albert, “don’t we deserve a reward for all our hard work?” But Max said that they should save the money in case of an emergency. So they argued about it all day and the next day and the next day until Albert got tired of arguing, and then Max won the argument. They decided to hide the money in an old shoe box in Albert’s backyard.



One day when they were outside grabbing litter and old garbage as usual, they found something buried under a pile of rotten leaves. At first they thought it was just a plain old ordinary white glove, nothing special. But then Albert

discovered something amazing. When he put the glove on his hand, his fingers began to tingle with a strange feeling of power. He decided to try and lift a huge heavy rock with his hand. It felt as light as a feather! Then Max put the glove on. He was able to lift a whole car with just one hand! They could hardly believe their good luck. With this magic glove, imagine all the amazing things they could do!



Max and Albert made a deal that they would keep the glove a secret, for now. “We won’t tell anyone.” They promised each other and shook on it. They went back to Albert’s backyard to hide the glove in the box with the money. They decided that maybe God wanted them to do more good for the world. They

thought about all the possibilities and planned how they could improve their mission of doing good.

After a long day of discussion, they decided they had to disguise the glove. White was just too bright of a color and would stand out too much. Max was a star football player so he said, “Hey, we can paint the glove and it will look just like my football glove.” Albert replied, “Yes, that’s a good idea, but I’m worried the glove might not work if we paint it.” Max hadn’t thought of that. So they made a list of other ways to disguise the glove. Albert said, “What about gluing the leaves to it? That way we won’t mess with its powers.” Max agreed that would help hide the glove, but people would be suspicious when they saw them wearing a glove with leaves glued to it. The boys spent that whole Saturday trying to figure out the best plan for the glove. It grew late and was almost time for the boys to go to bed. They were returning the box of treasures to its hiding spot in the yard when something even most incredible happened! It was another white glove being blown in a breeze, and it was coming right toward them!

Max and Albert were astonished at what they were seeing. How could this be happening to them? Was it fate or just their turn to be lucky! BANG...the glove hit Albert right in the head. He fell flat on the hard concrete pavement with a concussion . Max was hysterical crying, he did not know what to do or where to go. But out of nowhere the other white glove came flying down from the backyard, swooshing down to pick Albert up. Both white gloves teamed together to get him back to consciousness. The boys realized that both gloves had

magical powers, how could that even be possible! The two gloves glided simultaneously in front of Max and Albert and introduced themselves. “Hi boys, we are Jesus’ Helping Hands. We were sent by God to help guide you in the right direction. We want to make sure you are doing all that you can for the environment and also to lend a helping hand to all those in need.”

Wow, that's amazing! How can two boys be so blessed as to have found these white gloves. They seemed like white doves flying through the sky without a care in the world. “What can we do so that we can make an impact on the world around us like God wants us to?” “Well, you can team up with all your friends and relatives to do all you can to keep our earth clean. We also suggest that you gather extra change and items that are no longer useful and donate them to the homeless people.” Then as fast as they came to the boys it was as fast as they left. The boys looked up and saw a gigantic airplane with a ladder coming down through the clouds. They saw a huge shadow lifting the gloves and poof...they were gone!

This story was written by:

Stephanie Gerlach's Third Grade - St. Leo's School - Elmwood Park, NJ

Mrs. Ricciardi's Third Grade - Academy of the Most Blessed Sacrament - Franklin Lakes, NJ

Josephine Paladino's Third Grade - Corpus Christi School - Hasbrouck Heights, NJ

Kelly Oliveira's Third Grade - The Academy at St. Mary - Rutherford, NJ

The Rapping Humanoid

It was an ordinary day with Michael, Luigi, Lily, and Jessica heading into the school building. On the way to their classroom, they spotted a poster saying “Talent Show – sign up today!”

“Let’s all sign up,” said one of the children.



These friends all wanted to participate and started talking about their special talents. The boys started with their ideas. Michael holds a green belt in karate and is a star pitcher for his travel baseball team. Luigi loves to tell jokes and is a good comedian. Next the girls shared their talents with the group. Lily is a very talented gymnast and Jessica loves to roller skate and sing. The four friends were talking about the talent show when suddenly they heard a loud noise. When they turned around they could not believe their eyes!

There was a crash outside. A meteor crashed outside of their school. The stage where they were to perform was destroyed. Suddenly the meteor cracked open and five aliens emerged from the rock.

In front of Michael, Luigi, Lily, and Jessica stood green slimy leprechaun humanoid aliens. The aliens started break dancing and rapping. They introduced themselves to the kids as Sollymon the First and Second, Bub the Third and Fourth, and Tiny Muffin. They challenged the kids in the talent show to see who is more talented.

“You want to challenge us?” asked Michael.

“Why would we want to challenge aliens!” shouted Lily.

“Look what you did?” cried Jessica.

“You destroyed our stage!” yelled Luigi.

The four friends were really upset and didn’t know what to do. They looked around and saw all of their classmates with frightened looks on their faces and they knew they had to come up with a plan. Quickly they gathered all of the fourth graders and came up with a routine using all of their talents. Together they came up with a show that would blow everyone away!!

Looking Sollymon the First and Second, Bud the Third and Fourth, and Tiny muffin in their one eye, they busted out a beat and rapped, “Challenge Accepted!”

As they quickly got into their positions, Michael and Luigi started beat boxing. While the boys beat boxed, Lily and Jessica started their routine. They were pretty good. Their rap was about their 4th grade special moments. Once they were done, the

aliens started. The aliens were really good. Their rap was amazing. Everyone was wowed by their moves. At this point,



the children thought they lost. And they did!

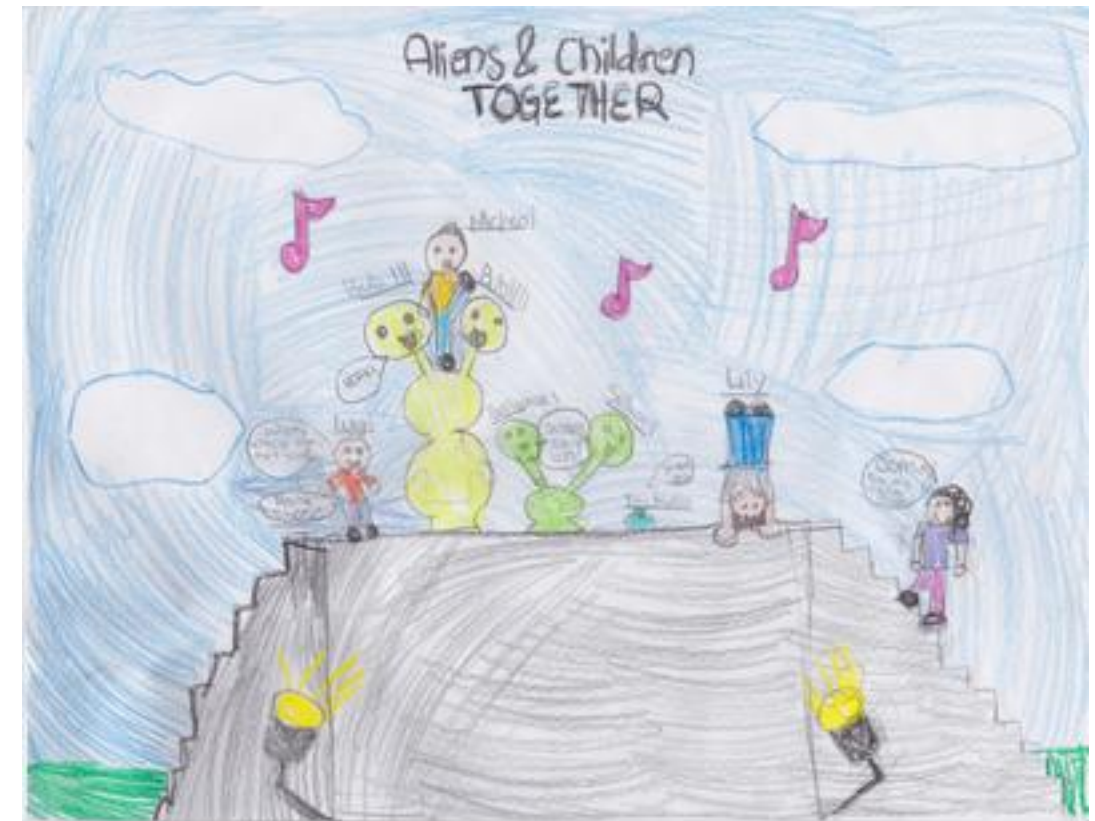
Sollymon I and II said, “You you beat us?!” All of the other aliens laughed.

Tiny Muffin said, “I think we should help them.” But Bud III and IV said “in your sweet dreams, Tiny Muffin!” Tiny Muffin said “that is not nice.” The aliens saw the children’s disappointment and said, “Let’s build the stage together with the valuables we bought!” “Really?? Thank you so much” exclaimed Lily. The aliens said sorry and called the builder



and designer aliens to rebuild the stage. The clouds started to clear. But before they left, they asked them to perform with them.

""Hit it!" said Jessica. The music started to play and they did an amazing dance. "We are a good team," said Lily. "Yeah," agreed Michael. Now the children and aliens were friends forever.



Friends forever!

This story was written by:

Kim Fiore's Fourth Grade - Trinity Academy - Caldwell, NJ

Maggie Pysklo's Fourth Grade - St. Thomas the Apostle School - Bloomfield, NJ

Jennifer Goodman's Fourth Grade - Good Shepherd Academy - Irvington, NJ

Julia Guthrie's Fourth Grade - Notre Dame Academy - Palisades Park, NJ

The Swirl of Spring Break

On a warm, muggy spring day Isabelle, Anne, John and Jeff were sitting in their last period class which was Science. Anne looked at her three friends and knew instinctively that they were all daydreaming about spring break which was only a few minutes away. Suddenly, Anne heard the distant ringing of a bell.

Not realizing that it was Ms. Newman ringing the bell on her desk to get them focused back on the task at hand. Anne then heard Ms. Newman saying “Children, I need you to be listening to the directions of the project.” “Project, what project?” Anne wondered. Looking around, she realized that she was not the only one who was not focused. “You have to write a biography report about a famous inventor. Here is the paper explaining the project,” explained Ms. Newman. Suddenly the dismissal bell rang and all the children took the paper and ran for the door. Ms. Newman stopped them to explain that the project was due when they returned from spring break.

The four friends decided to go to the town library right after school to begin researching information about different inventors. Arriving at the library, they went straight to the computers to look up inventors. John said, “Wouldn’t it be great if we could interview one.” Anne said, “That would be nice except some of them aren't alive today.” While Isabelle, John and Anne were researching on the computers, Jeff decided to explore some of the old books that were on the shelves. Jeff noticed a dusty, falling apart, thick book and decided to look at it. As he was flipping through the discolored pages, a paper fell out of it. Picking it up off the floor and opening it, he noticed that it was a map of some sort with an X marked over a body of water. Jeff brought it over to show the group. Isabelle looked at it and noticed a familiar sight on the map. “Look, it’s the lake in the woods near your house John. Let’s go over and see what this X might mean.” said Isabelle.

Everyone decided that the research could wait since their spring vacation had just started. With their hearts racing, they left the library, got on their bikes and followed the map through the woods to the lake.

Once they arrived at the lake, they noticed that the water was turquoise in color and it was swirling around in a counterclockwise manner. The children stood there mesmerized by the swirling water. Taking the map from Jeff, Anne noticed that the X was right over the center of the moving water. John thought there must be something significant about the water. He picked up a few stones and started to try to throw them into the center of the swirl. After a few tries, a stone hit bulls eye into the center. Slowly the water started to decline in speed. Seeing this, the other children picked up some stones and started to throw them in. Soon the water slowed down to a complete stop. The children were not sure why the water had stopped moving. “Maybe there is something magical about the center of the water,” Isabelle said. Suddenly, before their eyes, the center of the water parted to reveal a set of stairs. Being the adventurous one, Jeff suggested that they see where the stairs lead to. Nervously, the children swam out to the center. Once there, they walked slowly down the darkened stairwell. It seems that the stairs led to an underground tunnel. After walking for what seemed like an hour when it was only minutes, Anne suggested that they turn around and go back. “I am not sure I want to continue with this. We don’t know where this is going to lead us to.” Anne replied nervously. Just when they were

ready to turn around and go back, they saw a beam of light in the distance. John said, “Maybe we should follow the light. It will probably bring us to the other side of the lake.” They all agreed to continue on. As they got closer to the light, they heard voices in the distance and sound of what appeared to be wagon wheels moving over cobblestones. As the children emerged out of the light, they realized that something was wrong. They saw men on horseback, ladies wearing long dresses and bonnets and cobblestone streets. The children looked at each other in stunned confusion. Anne was the first one to speak. “Where are we?” she asked.

They walked out onto the cobblestone street and looked around. The children were able to see more of their surroundings. Isabelle looked at Anne and said “Were you wearing that before?” Anne looked down, and noticed that she was wearing a baby blue colored dress with a white bonnet on her head. “I don’t own a bonnet, Isabelle!” she replied. Jeff noticed that their outfits had changed, too. The boys donned a pair of suspenders and black trousers with a cotton shirt. The children started to walk, after adjusting to their new outfits. John saw a cow in the barn on the right side of the cobblestone street. Jeff cried out, “Look! There’s a chicken, too!” They all went into the barn to take a closer look at the animals that they saw. Suddenly, the farmer approached the children. “What are you doing here?!” the farmer exclaimed. His voice was scratchy, loud, and terrifying to the children, so much so that they jumped at the sound of it. Anne, being so frightened by the farmer, yelled “I want my mommy!” Isabelle

started to stutter “We-we-we’re lost...and-and-we’re trying to get back home.” “I don’t care! Get out of my barn!” screamed the farmer at the children. The surly old farmer chased the children out of his barn.

Once, out on the cobblestone streets, the children saw a man passing by. This man, who saw what had happened, said to them “Don’t mind him. That’s grumpy old Farmer Bob”. John replied to the strange man, “Thank you for that information. Farmer Bob really scared us, but I guess he’s harmless. Have a great day!” Jeff added “Wait! What year is it?” The strange man replied “Why it’s 1689! Why do you ask?” “We are trying to get home,” replied Anne. “Thank you for your help,” Isabelle said.

The children then continued down the cobblestone street. Isabelle cried out “Look! There’s an abandoned house to the left.” What the children didn’t realize, was that the strange man had been following them down the street. Jeff suggested that they see what they could discover inside this home. The children slowly, and cautiously, walked up to the abandoned house. The strange man continued to follow the children. “Wait up!” he called to the them. “Why don’t you come to my house, where I will feed you, and let you sleep? You seem tired from your journey.” Anne yelled “Run!” and all the children bolted into the abandoned house, for fear of this man. The door, slammed behind them, all on its own.

When the kids were inside the house, they walked around to see what was inside. No matter how far or how long they searched, nothing could be found inside the house. John suddenly yelled “Hey guys! I found something!” The children ran towards John to see what he found. John held up an old, worn journal with pages falling out. Suddenly, the door to the house opened up slightly, and produced an ominous green glow. John dropped the book, in surprise, and the light went out. Jeff, being the adventurous one, picked up the book again. As soon as the book entered his hands, the green glow appeared again. Isabelle said “Let’s see where the door takes us.” The children walked trembling toward the glow of the door.

Suddenly, a swirl of wind swept the children up off the floor, and dragged them into the glow. They arrived on another cobblestone street with wagons passing by. As they saw the wagons pass by, the heard voices speaking with an English accent. “Bonjour!” a man said to the group. “My name is Denis Papin, and welcome to London.”

They all looked around and were very confused. They all wondered where they were. They did not see the glowing green light anymore but, what was that up ahead? Isabelle walked up the cobblestone path and peered through the old rusty stained glass window. Jack turned around and saw an incredible large Ferris Wheel. Then, they felt eyes on their backs and turned to see a mysterious man following them. He was wearing all black with a green beret over his curly white hair.

“Wait a minute”, said Anne. “Something isn’t right here. That Ferris Wheel back there - it can’t be. I am doing my report on the Ferris Wheel for science class. It was invented by George Ferris in 1893 for the Chicago World’s Fair.”

John interjected, “Denis Papin said we were in London, so that must be the “Great Wheel.” It was modeled after the Ferris Wheel! But that man near Farmer Bob’s farm told us it was 1689! Somehow we are stuck in some kind of crazy time warp.”

Isabelle added, “It has something to do with that old journal that Jeff is holding. But, I really don’t like the look of this creepy guy with the beret who is following us!”

“Me neither,” said Jeff. “Run to the Great Wheel, quickly!”

The four friends took off towards the Great Wheel, and sure enough, the mysterious man started to run after them. All the running caused his beret and curly white wig to fall off and revealed a shiny, bald head.

“He really doesn’t look friendly!” said Jeff. “Cut in front of that line of people, we have to get on that Great Wheel NOW!”

John added, “It has 40 cars and each can hold about 40 people. We’ll squeeze in somehow. Run faster!”

The four kids jumped into one of the spacious empty cars. The bald man slipped through the door of the car at the very last second and shouted, “Please, stop running and listen to me! I

overheard that one of you is doing a report on my invention and I wanted to assist you.” At that moment he removed the bald cap from his head.

“You’re George Ferris? That’s amazing!” said Anne. As the Great Wheel began to turn, George Ferris told the kids everything they could possibly want to know about his amazing invention.

When there was finally a break in the conversation about steel and steam engines and axles, John said, “This is all incredibly interesting, and I don’t want to be rude, but how are we getting home?”

George Ferris answered, “That’s actually quite easy to do. Just turn to page 157 in that magic journal you’re holding.”

Jeff opened the journal to page 157 and instantly the pages began to give off a green glow. The Great Wheel started to pick up speed. Soon they were spinning so fast they could no longer see the ground below or the sky above. When the spinning finally stopped, the kids found themselves at the top of the stairs in the middle of the lake. They could see John’s house off in the distance and there were four bikes parked at the edge of the lake.

This story was written by:

Mrs. Beth McNamara's Fifth Grade - Our Lady of the Lake School - Verona, NJ

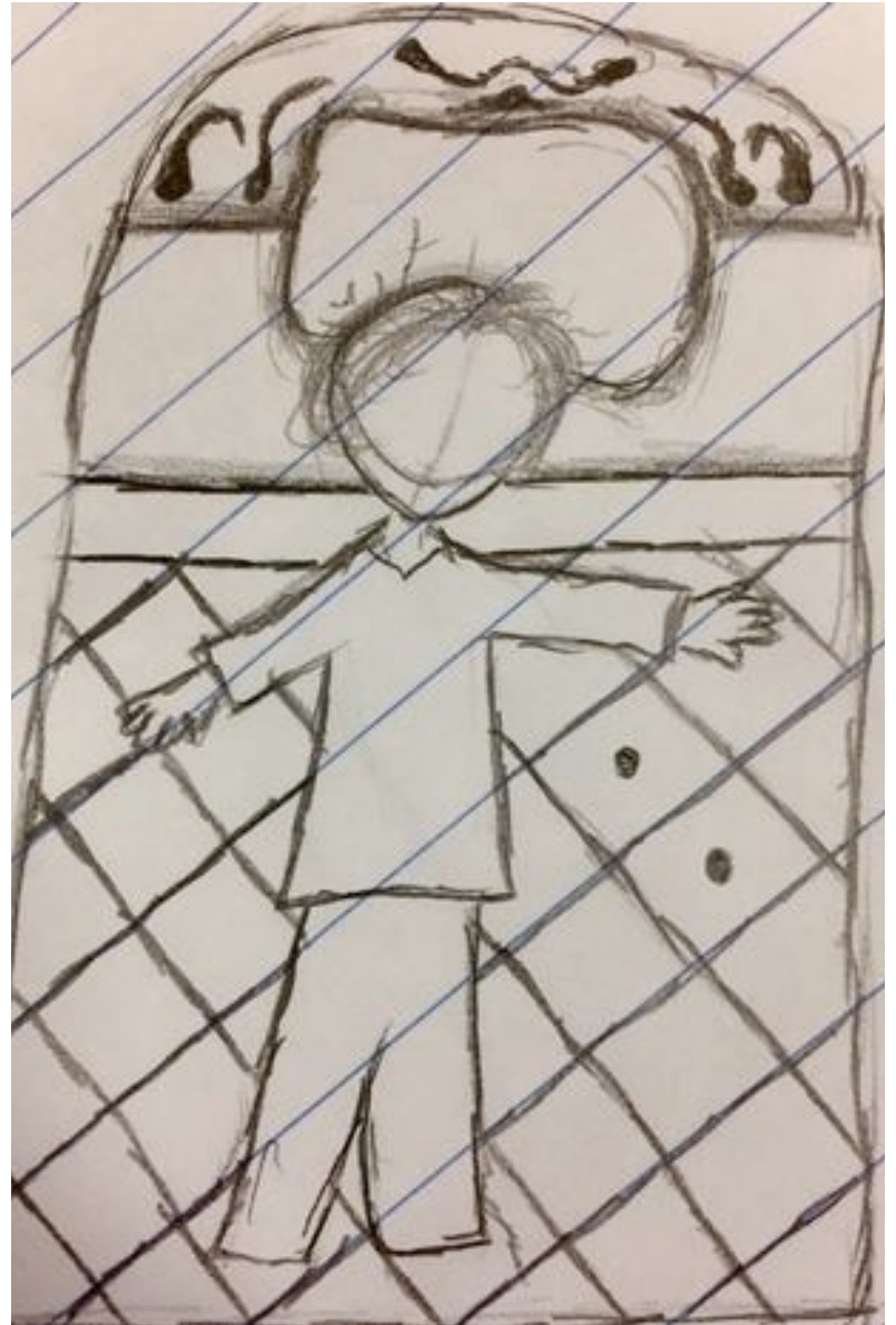
Ms. Stamer's Fifth Grade - St. John the Apostle School - Clark, NJ

Mrs. McGrath's Fifth Grade - Our Lady of Guadalupe Academy - Elizabeth, NJ

Jill Spellman's Fifth Grade - Holy Trinity School - Westfield, NJ

The Wish I Wished I Never Wished

“Come on, Zach, it’s time to go to the dentist,” I said, trying to get Zach to come to the car. “Rain?,” he asked me, looking out the window.



After a frustrating and long appointment, all I wanted to do was play video games, but Zach was right there as my shadow. “Peter, I wanna play Rocket League!” he told me. I wanted to say no, but my parents would yell at me for not including him. Ever since Zach was diagnosed my parents don’t pay attention to me, they spend all of their energy on Zach, they seem to forget that I am only eleven years old. “Alright, Zach, you can play after me,” I said warily. “NO! I want to play NOW!” My mother was giving me the look, so I slowly handed him the controller. “Have fun,” I said halfheartedly. I stormed to my room and slammed the door shut. My first thought was: *I wish I never had a brother.*

Frustrated and annoyed, I fell on my bed and let my previous thoughts gnaw at me until I drifted off into a deep sleep.

“Peter, let’s go, time for dinner!” Mom shouted up the steps.

I opened my eyes and felt like I had been asleep for hours rather than a few minutes. I got up, yawned, and stretched. My hands felt tight, and my arms were stiff. Shaking off the feeling, I got up and started to make my way downstairs. As I was walking, it felt like I was walking on water; I felt unbalanced. My eyes widened when the smell of tacos lingered through the air. Tacos? Usually when Zach was upset or yelled, his favorite dinner, mac and cheese, was sitting on the table regardless of what I wanted.

Without thinking, I started walking towards the kitchen until I saw my parents sitting in the dining room. Why are they in the dining room? I thought. The dining room was only ever

used for holidays because when Zach got upset he would throw food on the floor. It was easier for Mom to clean Zach’s mess off of linoleum floors rather than carpet. I stopped in the doorway to process what was going on.

“Mom, where’s Zach?” I asked.

“Who?” she responded with a puzzled look on her face.

“You know, my brother?” I replied.

“Peter, you know you’re an only child. Stop playing games and eat your dinner!” Mom answered sternly.

Dazed and confused, I ran over to get our family photo album to show my mother that I wasn’t crazy. I flipped the album open to our latest family portrait and held it up to show my mother.

My mother pointed at the photo and said, “Yes, here is your father, and you, and me.” I turned the album to look at the photo and realized Zach wasn’t in the picture. After a moment of confusion, my mind began to think of all of the things I would finally be able to do without him around anymore.

After dinner, I started toward my room, but stopped at Zach’s door along the way. I turned the doorknob and opened the door only to find rain boots and coats. Zach’s room was a closet.



As I got ready for bed, I thought about how Zach and I would always race to see who could be ready the fastest. I began to miss him and I climbed into my bed. Just then, I heard a knock at my door. “Peter,” my dad began, “it's only 8:30. You don't have to go to bed yet.”

“But you said since Zach's bedtime was 8:30 that I had to go to bed as well,” I replied.

“Peter, stop with the Zach nonsense!” my dad responded.

That night, I drifted off to sleep wondering where Zach was and if I would ever see him again. The next morning, as I walked to my homeroom, I spotted Zach.

“Zach! Zach! Zach!” I yelled as I ran up and hugged my brother.

“Uh...,” he replied looking at me confused. “Do I know you?”

Then the bell rang, and a teacher approached me.

“You should be in class,” the teacher exclaimed, “go to the principal's office for a late slip!” As I walked down the hallway, I suddenly saw darkness and felt like I was getting pulled somewhere. I opened my eyes and saw an odd man in front of me.

Future Peter



The odd man broke the silence by saying, "I am you from the future." He continued, "You have made a grave mistake." He pulled out a circular object then, POOF, a blinking machine appeared. "This is a time machine," he explained, "For each of Zach's seven years of life, find seven items to prove that he is your brother. If you don't find them by midnight, you will no longer have any memory of Zach," he said. "Good Luck," yelled future Peter and in a snap he disappeared.

"Wait, I have so many questions," I yelled. Then the door to the time machine closed on me and with a flash I was back in my house.



My thoughts were racing, "Seven items," I thought. "This is crazy, seven items! This is madness!" I went to the principal's office. I was very nervous because her secretary who wrote the slips was very strict. She could also be very nice, but you could hear and sense the strictness in her voice.

“Hello, Peter, what can I do for you today,” she exclaimed. “I was late, may I have a late slip, please?” I asked. “Of course,” she replied, “but you’re not a baby anymore. You can’t be late. In high school, you will get a detention for that. Just be careful, ok?” I tried to take my time and wanted to think about what she had told me. I knew I wasn’t a baby anymore. “That’s



it!” I exclaimed. Luckily, no one heard me. The first item must have been from when Zach was a baby.

I can’t express how confused I was. I was walking home from school and I suddenly warped to my house at 10:00 p.m. I still hadn’t found any items, and it was currently 11:59. Would I ever see my brother again? Would I have to live the rest of my life without him, regretting the awful wish I had made because I was angry?

Future Peter interrupted my thoughts. It was midnight; all my chances were over. “You haven’t proven that you are worthy enough to get your brother back,” he said, “and you will have to live without him forever. You’re an uncaring brother and you do not deserve his love.”

I was speechless and in a total daze. I couldn’t believe Future Peter could say that I didn’t love Zach. After a few seconds of silence, I started to weep. My watery eyes shed a single tear while I noticed a single shooting star flying overhead.

“Peter? Peter! Wake up. Why are you crying?” asked Zach my older brother. He put his hand on my shoulder and looked concerned. I remembered at that moment that I was the younger son. I am autistic. Was this all a dream? I hugged Zach and said, “I never wanted you to leave me! I’m sorry for wishing that you were gone.”

“What are you talking about? I was always here,” he exclaimed. “But it’s okay, I know I can be annoying sometimes.” Zach put his arm around me and we walked down the stairs to eat dinner. We were having my favorite dinner, tacos, because I was so upset before I fell asleep. At

least that's what my brother told me. All the while the words,
"Be careful what you wish for" echoed in my mind.

"Hey, Peter, do you want to play Rocket League with me after
dinner?" asked Zach.

"Yes! Yes! Yes!" I shouted.

I was the happiest boy in the world!!

This story was written by:

Madeline Cuffari's Sixth Grade - Our Lady of Czestochowa School

- Jersey City, NJ

Mrs. Amanda Baier's Sixth Grade - St. Leo's School - Elmwood Park, NJ

Ann Frank's Sixth Grade - Academy of Saint Paul - Ramsey, NJ

Mrs. Andrea Neuman's Sixth Grade - Holy Spirit School - Union, NJ

Jeff Moeller's Sixth Grade Class - St. Joseph Academy - Bogota, NJ

Mrs. Linda Hodges' Sixth Grade Class - St. Peter's Academy - River Edge, NJ

The Eyes Have It

This is not easy. I have adjusted to a life of independence, but I am still feel lonely most of the time. I have felt a sense of being loved and a sense of being accepted. Yet, I still don't truly know who I am. There have been times when I have felt comfortable and secure, but then I have been moved to another family.

It just doesn't seem to end. One day, I hope to feel a true sense of worth and independence.

I have enjoyed some of my stops along the way. There were the O'Brien's in Chicago, who were a traditional Irish-Catholic family with traditional values and practices. They all truly respected each other and honored the hallmark of family. Being with them showed me how to appreciate another person's points of views and perspectives along with defending and protecting my inner circle of family and friends. It also provided me with the insight and discernment on how to see life through another person's peaks and valleys in his or her life. I know it has been difficult for me, but I also realize how other persons are dealing with their own crosses to bear.

The other families, notably the Greenspan's and the Fiore's have helped introduce me to ways and celebrations of other cultures. Those experiences have really deepened my respect for people of all backgrounds. Through it all, I have managed to keep my faith. I know God has a course out there for me, and I surely have followed a number of different paths. As a result, my faith has been strengthened.

Calm and tranquil. Loud and troubled. These two different sides keep wrestling themselves like predator and prey. From the outside, it's like my blue eye wants me to stay calm, but my green eye fights it and tells me to shout with rage. I have to keep it together; stay in control, stay in control. What an easy concept.

All I know about myself is that I was born on August 17, 1944 in Chicago, Illinois. I don't know much about my parents, but I have been told that: they didn't have enough money for me, I wasn't wanted, and they died in an accident. I don't know which one to believe or if any of them are true. After a while, I became numb to the pain of not knowing.

Not having a home of my own makes me a nomad. When you're stuck with a different family every month, you start to feel discarded like wilting roses. However, I am hopeful and would like to believe that there is someone out there who is missing me.



"WELCOME TO DALLAS" The sign greeted us as we pulled off the interstate highway. It was eight days into our cross-

country adventure and Johnny O'Brien had wanted to stop to see where it was that President Kennedy was assassinated. We had made plans to drive across the country last year when we caught up with each other at a music festival in Chicago. We weren't planning a stop in Texas, but Mrs. O'Brien had insisted we make this part of our journey and I obliged happily. Anything for Mrs. O'Brien. It was three months since that horrible November day and she was still at home wearing a black veil and mourning for "poor little John-John and Caroline."

As we pulled up to Parkland Memorial Hospital, the place where our 35th President had died, I got a sudden sense of déjà vu. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't shake the odd sense I was feeling. I had never been to Dallas, or even this hospital, before today. Or had I? There was something very familiar about this place. Sure, it had been all over the news back in November, but that wasn't it. Then it hit me like a ton of bricks - the letter I had found when I was seven. Dallas! Parkland Memorial Hospital! Accident! Could it be? Could I be at the very place where my own parents had died? Could there be information here that could help me uncover who I really was? I HAD TO FIND OUT!

I started breathing heavily and couldn't move. Finding out about my parents was what I lived for as long as I remembered. But now I was afraid to go to my destiny. Maybe I will come back tomorrow. Let me think about this first! But then my feet started walking on their own even though I didn't want them to! Suddenly I was at the door, I was at the front

desk, I was staring at a kind-looking grey-haired nurse, and she was asking me, "May I help you young man?" I couldn't move my mouth because I didn't know what I would say. I guess I didn't exactly practice for this!! I frantically tried to think up a story that was believable, I think I was just staring at her and she was staring back at me with dark brown kind eyes. Then I heard, "DON'T BE AFRAID PLEASE, LET ME HELP YOU!"

I heard her ask twice, but I couldn't comprehend much that was happening due to my excitement. Once I got a hold of my emotions I said "I'm Andrew, Andrew Lutz. My stomach hurts a lot and I can't seem to do anything to calm the pain." I lied straight to her face. I needed an excuse to walk through those doors and find out all about who I was and who I truly am. "Okay, Andrew. Please fill out this form to complete all of the information needed, then follow me," the nurse at the front desk, whose name was Nurse Sanchez said. When she got up from her seat, she looked at me. It definitely wasn't any regular look, but I tried to dismiss it. I followed her, deep down inside feeling very anxious, yet joyful. She was leading me to a room in which I would wait to see a doctor, she explained while we walked...before everything went dark. I fainted. I woke up and I was surrounded by doctors already in a hospital bed. I grasped the realization that I fainted sufficiently quickly. It must've been all of my mixed emotions and it overwhelmed me. The doctors hadn't known I was awake yet, so they continued to speak about me as if I was still asleep. "He's going to need an appendectomy today. Schedule



an OR as soon as possible so he can go home and recover quickly. No time wasted." What? There's something actually wrong with me? I faked it! The same nurse from the front desk told all of the doctors to leave the room so I could rest, until she saw I was awake. "Andrew! You're awake! Since you fainted, we figured it was time to do some tests such as CAT scans and such. Turns out your appendix will need to be removed. It will be a quick surgery and everything will turn out okay." Everything the nurse said went in one ear and out the other. This is crazy. But why is she being so nice to me?

I came out of surgery. I was still a little loopy from the anesthesia they gave me. The lady at the front desk was in my room, making sure I was alright. Nurse Sanchez sat at my bed

side and took my hands in hers. I was confused and scared. I didn't know what to think. I looked at her eyes, and her eyes looked exactly like mine. And then she began with "Mijo..." No one EVER called me that. But for some reason, it reminded me of something from my earlier years. Something from when I was a child. "...When I first saw you, you reminded me of someone. Someone dear to me. I looked in the hospital's records and I checked your birth date. It was the same birth date of my grandson, named Andres, and your name is Andrew. Not only do the birth dates match, but..." She lifted my arm and pointed to my birthmark shaped like a heart. "...My grandson had a birth mark just like yours..." She began to cry. "My daughter put him in a foster home many years ago and I haven't seen him ever since." My eyes widen. I gasped.

"You look so much like him," she said. "You have one green eye and one blue eye too." I couldn't believe it. I had a grandma. She suddenly fell to the floor sobbing. "So...I'm your..." she stopped me "...grandson?" Then, the curiosity became too much. "Are they alive?" The tears suddenly subsided. "Your father" she began, "worked hard to provide for you. You see...we were all poor. We didn't have anything saved for your future. He was a good man. The one thing that your parents insisted on was celebrating the beginning of the Lenten season. Every year, the town celebrates this with a festival with rides, food, and music to commemorate Fat Tuesday, the day before Lent begins. As your favorite treat was churros, your dad made you sit on the bench while he maneuvered his way to the stand in line for your sugary

delight. Within five minutes, you were gone. Your parents looked everywhere alerting the authorities, not sleeping, and praying for your return. After many months they stopped searching. They were never the same, but nonetheless...never gave up hope." At that precise moment, my foster dad walked in. He was wondering about my appendix and how I ended up in the hospital. He asked why I was crying. "I want you to meet someone...this is my grandma, my Abuela." My real parents never dropped me off in a foster home...it was my kidnapper who took me there. With that...every few years I was placed in different homes throughout the country and ended up here in Dallas. It wasn't until my strange desire to visit the hospital where JFK was treated, that I started feeling queasy. Whatever this strange force was that was "calling me" to this location, I will never know, but I had to go anyway. It must have been God's plan to bring me to this location at this moment in time. For once I felt complete.

This story was written by:

Mrs. Amanda Baier's Seventh Grade - St. Leo's School - Elmwood Park, NJ

Jeff Moeller's Seventh Grade Class - St. Joseph Academy - Bogota, NJ

Ms. Tami Fazio's Seventh Grade Class - St. Michael School - Newark, NJ

Kat Barrett's Seventh Grade Class - Ironbound Catholic Academy - Newark, NJ

Mrs. Sharon Osnato's Seventh Grade Class - St. John the Apostle School - Clark, NJ

A “Fairy Tale” Ending

Everyone has been there at one time or another. It’s those moments in life when one wishes that they could turn back time and handle something differently. Eighth grade is no different.

At this point in a student's life, it’s easy to be distracted by future possibilities and even easier to forget about the past. However, with the past making us who we are, it wouldn’t be fair to forget who supported us along the way.

Eighth grader Molly is the type of girl who believes life is just like the movies. She lives her life with the idea that everything works out the way it should and that fairy tale endings ALWAYS exist. Anxiously awaiting her acceptance letters, she expected nothing less than getting into the co-ed high school of her choice and going there with her best friend, John. John, on the other hand, is quite different from Molly. While Molly has many other friends, John is often by himself in school if he isn't with Molly. Before Molly moved to town, John was quite the loner-type. However, on the day he met Molly, that quickly changed. When John was around ten years old, he was riding his bike at a park on Main Street, when he suddenly hit a speed bump, flipped over his handlebars, and knocked out his front teeth. As a group of boys at the park started making fun of him, Molly, who was out walking her dog and exploring her new neighborhood, made sure he was okay. From that point on, their relationship was more like being brother and sister and less like being just friends. It seemed as if their friendship would stand the test of time, and their futures would bring them to the same high school.

The bell rings, signaling the class dismissal. Molly and John walk home together, splitting up once they reach John’s house. After Molly proceeds to her house, she finds a red envelope in her mailbox, with the name of the her first high school choice

written upon the center. Grabbing the envelope, she heads inside the house, walking excitedly to her room. Anxiously staring at the envelope in her hand, she decides to call John, who answers almost immediately. "John, did you get a letter from P. Sherman High, and if you did, do you want to open it together?" Molly eagerly asks, John replying yes.

The sound of ripping paper was heard from the other side of the phone. Molly quickly skims through the letter, trying to find her results. On the other end, John let out a victorious laugh. "I got accepted!" John exclaims. Meanwhile, Molly bites her lip and reads over her the mid section of the acceptance letter with complete and utter disbelief. "Our high school has offered admission for the maximum number of candidates that can be admitted at this time. For this reason, we have establish a waiting list and you have been selected as one of the applicants granted wait list status." She reads inaudibly, nobody but herself being able to properly hear. "Huh? Did you get in?" John asks, oblivious to what she had said. With dejection, Molly lies, replying that she had. "John, I'll speak to you tomorrow. I'll go tell my parents about the letter and my results now." She hangs up the phone, not bothering to wait for a reply, and heads into the kitchen where her parents were located. As soon as they averted their gaze to the disheartened girl, Molly began to cry while tightening her grip on the now crumpled letter. "I was w-wait listed by P. Sherman..." Molly stammers, as she lays the paper down. She storms back into her room and locks the door, shutting herself in.

The next day at school Molly tried to avoid John for as long as possible, but running into him was inevitable. "Hey Molly! How excited are you that we are going to P. Sherman together?" John exclaimed with a huge smile on his face. "Oh um, yeah I'm excited," Molly replied nervously. "Molly is something wrong?" John asked her. "Everything is fine. I'm just really tired. I was up late celebrating my acceptance with my parents," Molly lied hoping he wouldn't notice how she was shaking. Molly and John never lied to each other and she hated herself for not being able to just tell him the truth. "That's so fun Molly! My mom actually wanted to throw a party for us tonight! She is so excited that we are going to P. Sherman and staying friends! She said she was going to talk to your parents today, and I'm sure they will say yes!" Molly was freaking out inside.

Now he would know that she didn't get in and that she lied to him. She knew she had to do something. "Yeah John that sounds great. I'll catch up with you later. I have to go." Molly walked away with her head down and immediately went to her locker and called her mom. "Hey Mom it's Molly. Did you get a call from John's mom today? No. That's great. I need you to do me a favor. Tell her I got into P. Sherman High."

Molly's mom was confused about why she was telling her to lie. "Molly, why do I have to lie? Did you tell John that you didn't get in?" Molly's mom asked. Molly answered nervously, "No mom, I didn't tell John about not getting in. I told him I got in instead."

I was very heartbroken to hear that he got accepted and I didn't." I started to cry. "H-he has be-been my best friend and I really wanted to go to that school with him."

"I'll tell them that you got in, Molly, but you have to promise to tell John the truth tonight," stated her mom. "I will, I promise, mom."

She hung up the phone and sat there wondering how she was going to tell John. She knew that she had to tell him without anyone around. She decided they would walk and get ice cream, and on the way back, she would tell him. Molly texted John about getting ice cream and he replied, "OK."

Later that day, Molly and John went out for ice cream. While they were eating, Molly kept thinking about her letter. The thought of not being accepted to P. Sherman High was causing her to feel ashamed, and unworthy. The thought of not being honest with John was making her feel guilty. Molly got up to get more napkins and while she was gone John noticed her back pack was opened. He got up to zip it shut, and noticed the letter with the P. Sherman Logo. He couldn't help himself, he read the letter. John was shocked and angry, he could not believe that Molly had lied to him.

"What is this?" John asked when she returned.

"Oh, um, I was going to tell you, I was just waiting for the right time." replied Molly.



"How could you hide something like this from me? I'm your best friend. We don't keep secrets from each other."



“Honestly, I was going to tell you today, I just didn’t know how.” said Molly.

John stormed off. He was hurt and angry and not willing to forgive her. Days turned into weeks and weeks turned into months. John still could not forgive her. Honesty was very important to him and he could not get past this. It was obvious to him that their friendship was over.

Fall came and John began his freshman year at P. Sherman High while Molly, who never got off the wait list, attended her town high school. Although their friendship ended, they each moved on and made new friends. Molly will always remembers the great memories she and John shared AND she will always remember the day she realized that life does not always have fairy tale endings.

This story was written by:

Laura Jones' Seventh Grade - Academy of Our Lady - Glen Rock, NJ

Samantha Sullivan's Eighth Grade - St. Aloysius Elementary Academy - Jersey City, NJ

Elaine Robinson's Eighth Grade - Academy of Saint Paul - Ramsey, NJ

Jeff Moeller's Eighth Grade Class - St. Joseph Academy - Bogota, NJ

Judi Agnew's Eighth Grade Class - St. Peter Academy - River Edge, NJ

Sunshine at the End of a Storm

The car was barreling down the road and into the darkness. “Maybe if they could just see things from my side,” Jake shouted above the blare of the thumping bass from the car’s speakers.

As he shot down the road at a dizzying speed, Jake was unaware of the sharp curve looming in front of him. But the realization came too late! Jake was gripped by terror as he lost control of his beloved red Challenger, swerved off the road and into the chasm below.

The reality of his predicament slowly set in as Jake attempted in vain to extricate himself from the tangled wreck. Very suddenly and without warning, Jake became aware of the car being pulled! But by what or whom? He twisted and turned his body to see what had grabbed hold of his car! His heart was beating wildly; the only sound he could hear was the blood pounding in his ears. “Please God,” he prayed, “please don’t let me die here alone.”

Jake thought of his family as he was being dragged away. He thought of his parents and how they would be worried about him. He thought about all they had done for him. Why did he do drugs while driving at high speeds on a winding road in the middle of the night? He wondered what would happen to him.

He looked over the black leather seats through the broken black glass and realized he was certainly not alone. “What was that?” he said to himself quietly. He looked over and saw that he was being pulled into a lake by large strands of seaweed with bulges looking similar to muscles. “Oh God. I regret everything!” He prayed frantically. “I don’t hate them. I love them. I wish they were here now. Please! Please! Help!”

These were his last words before he and his Challenger were fully submerged under the murky water. Gasping for breath he could not escape the grasps of the thing pulling him deeper into the lake. He slowly slipped away and lost all consciousness.

He woke up and could not see but realized that he could breathe under the water. He swam in a circle searching frantically for a place to rest. He felt a slimy creature brush his leg. *What was that?* He heard voices talking around him in different languages. “But he’s just a boy. We should never have brought him here.” He saw a light gradually coming closer and closer. Jake blacked out wondering what was approaching him and if he would ever see his family again.

When Jake regained consciousness he woke up and saw a light. He followed the light and it led him to a cold dark alley. He saw an old man shivering in the corner of the alley. As Jake was walking towards the old man, a stranger tapped his shoulders. The stranger told him not to go any further. Jake didn’t listen and went to go talk to the old man. Jake asked the old man if he was okay. “Don’t do drugs!” exclaimed the old man. The old man then decided to turn around to show his face. Jake’s jaw dropped. Jake then took a few steps back in fear. “Now you see, that is you ten years from now,” explained the stranger. “Can’t be! That man looks all broken down and hopeless,” said Jake. “Well, yes, that is what drugs can do to you,” said the stranger. Jake then broke down. He couldn’t take another look at the old man anymore. Suddenly

a beam of light appeared in front of him. Jake was being pulled into the light as he entered a new world.

In front of him he saw a barren path that was leading two ways. The stranger showed him the path that led to a door. He wanted Jake to see the life he could have had. He ran to the door; and it automatically opened without him even touching it. He looked around and something with white wings flew passed him. He fainted. Jake slowly started to see his future. He saw himself getting his diploma at both of his high school and college graduations. He saw his wife walking down the aisle on their wedding day with tears of joy. Lastly, he saw him and his wife holding their first child.

Jake couldn’t believe he just saw his life flash before his own eyes. He realized that he was facing death. He was scared! Then suddenly a soothing voice said, “That could be your life without drugs.” Jake regained consciousness once again and slowly opened his eyes with tears streaming down his cheeks. He got up and surprisingly saw his parents talking to a man outlined by a glowing light. Jake assumed that the man must have been God. Jake seemed confused. Wait! Am I alive? Are my parents dead or is it the other way questioned Jake.

The man started to walk towards Jake, and he quickly realized it was a police officer.

“Are you okay?”

“I think so,” Jake stammered.

“My name is Officer Hernandez, can you please explain what happened here?” The police officer asked looking concerned.

“Honestly officer, I don’t think I can.” Jake said looking down.

“Do you know what would cause you not to remember?” Officer Hernandez questioned.

“Yes sir, my poor decisions.”

The police officer took a deep breath and continued to calmly speak to Jake to retell the events from that night.

Once Officer Hernandez finished enlightening Jake about details that he was unaware of, Jake quickly realized his mistakes, apologized, and felt guilty and relieved at the same time.

Officer Hernandez assured Jake that no one was hurt but had this occurred an hour or so earlier, there would have been large crowds leaving the baseball field up the street.

The police officer looked Jake in the eye and said, “I know you feel pretty low right now, but you have a choice to make.”

Ten years later Jake is still reflecting back to the night when he made a decision that altered the course of his life for the better.

Sitting in his backyard with his wife, he was brought back from his memories by the sound of his son laughing while driving his own little battery powered red Challenger.

Jake never thought that that horrific night would be the start to something new and exciting; a new chapter in his life.

Rather than continuing on his path, Jake chose to listen and follow the good example of Officer Hernandez. In the end, Jake married the officer’s daughter, Stephanie Hernandez, and together they became the proud parents of a healthy baby boy named Lucas.

Looking at his son, he could only feel love and appreciation for the life that he chosen instead of the one drugs promised him.

This story was written by:

Maria Giorgio's Eighth Grade - Trinity Academy - Caldwell, NJ

Elaine Robinson's Eighth Grade - Academy of Saint Paul - Ramsey, NJ

Dottie Zobek's Eighth Grade Class - Good Shepherd Academy - Irvington, NJ

Mrs. Amanda Baier's Eighth Grade Class - St. Leo's School - Elmwood Park, NJ

Copyright

© 2017

All rights are reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing by the publisher, except by a reviewer who may quote brief passages in a review or a school who participated in this project during the 2016-2017 school year. For information regarding permission, contact the publisher at rcanstories@rcanschools.org.

All images were created by the students and published on the RCAN Stories wiki.

<http://rcanstories.wikispaces.com/>